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**Passage of International Megan's Law H.R. 5138
Excerpts of Remarks, Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)***July 27, 2010*

Our national and various state versions of Megan's Law have revolutionized how we deal with child predators. Maureen and Richard Kanka wrote the book on neighborhood notification and protection of children and families through information. We all owe an enormous debt to Maureen and Richard for taking a horrific tragedy—the sexual abuse and murder of their 7 year old daughter, Megan, in 1994—and turning it into the noble cause of protecting children in the U.S.

But now it is imperative that we take the lessons we have learned on how to protect our children from known child sex predators within our borders and expand those protections globally. Child predators thrive on secrecy, a secrecy that allows them to commit heinous crimes against children with impunity and without any meaningful accountability. Megan's Law—which its emphasis on notification—must go global, to protect American children and children worldwide.

Just last month, the Government Accountability Office issued a deeply disturbing report entitled "Current Situation Results in Thousands of Passports Issued to Registered Sex Offenders." The GAO found that at least 4,500 U.S. passports were issued to registered sex offenders in fiscal year 2008. The GAO emphasized that this number is probably understated due to the limitations of the data that it was able to access and analyze.

But what is even more disturbing are details about 30 of those sex offenders passport recipients that GAO selected for further investigation:

- One registered sex offender "solicited trips to Mexico to find 'young friends' with other 'boy lovers.'" The FBI found cameras and a medical bag with Spanish language flyers advertising lice removal for children, a procedure that requires children to undress." This offender, currently serving a prison sentence for possession of child pornography, applied for a passport because he "plans to live in Mexico after he serves his sentence to avoid registering as a sex offender."
- Another sex offender has multiple convictions for sexual contacts with two 11-year olds. The offender has traveled to the Philippines—a known child sex

tourism destination—as well as Germany and France since receiving his passport. He was recently indicted for possession of child pornography and for attempting to have sex with a 2-year old little girl.

- Several of the registered sex offenders used their passports to travel to known child sex tourism destinations, including Mexico, the Philippines and the Caribbean islands. The victims of several of these offenders ranged in ages from 7 to 11-years old.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 1.8 million children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation around the world each year. The GAO's report confirms that American sex offenders are a significant part of this outrage.

Based on information from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Congressional Budget Office estimates that each year about 10,000 sex offenders covered by the bill travel internationally. We have the information and technology at our disposal to determine who constitutes a high interest registered sex offender to ensure that appropriate government officials in destination countries are noticed in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5138 would establish the legal framework that is required to accomplish this achievable goal. Pursuant to this bill, registered sex offenders would notify our law enforcement 30 days before they travel, allowing experts in a newly-created International Sex Offender Travel Center, led by ICE, to ascertain whether the individual poses a high risk of sexually exploiting children in the destination country. If the answer is in the affirmative, our law enforcement would be able to notify officials in that country, who could then either monitor the activities of the sex offender when he enters or prevent him from entering altogether. The legislation also would establish sex offender registries at U.S. diplomatic missions for U.S. child sex offenders who reside in other countries. This foreign registration system would allow U.S. law enforcement to track the location of child sex offenders and to better ascertain if and when they re-enter the United States.

The goals of this legislation do not stop at protecting children overseas from U.S. predators. Sex offenders around the world are now able to cross borders and oceans to carry out their nefarious activity under the cloak of anonymity and disappear before a child is able or willing to reveal the crime. The International Megan's Law would establish the model needed for our Administration to pressure other countries to take action to stop child sex tourism originating within their borders and threatening children in the United States and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I personally have spoken to foreign officials and non-governmental representatives who have asked me when the United States Congress is going to do something about American sex offenders who are traveling to their countries to rape their children. International Megan's Law is the answer to that question, and I hope my colleagues will support this urgently needed legislation.